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The Federal Republic of Germany: Problems and Prospects

Rolph Pauls
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

In 1945 Germany emerged from the Second World War in a condition of total moral and political breakdown. Since then the foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany has sought to combine a vision of the future with the realities of the present. Today it maintains a strong commitment to the Common Market and the Atlantic Alliance and hopes in the future to negotiate the reunification of Germany.

A lecture delivered at the Naval War College

by

His Excellency Rolph Pauls

Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

Policy is the art of changing one's environment—of combining a vision of where the world should go with the reality of where it is. No country could have been more aware of the truth of this sentence than Germany as it emerged from the total political and moral breakdown of the last World War. The realities confronting Germany, and in particular the free part of the country, i.e., the Federal Republic of Germany, were harsh indeed: Germany had lost a war which had been started by Germans, and, as a result, the country was in ruins and politically divided.

Since then almost 25 years have passed, and we may say that the post-war period has come to an end. If we examine the situation today, we must, however, recognize that Germany is still divided and that the division has become perhaps even deeper through the time which has elapsed. On the other hand, in the Federal Republic the free part of Germany has been reconstructed as a modern democratic state, integrated into the free Western world, and is now a country which enjoys both economic and more important—political stability. This was recently demonstrated in our national elections held at the end of September, in which 88 percent of the voters participated, casting their votes for the democratic parties, while only 4.8 percent of the votes went to right or leftwing radicals. I think if in all countries of the world, the radicals of either side would only get so small a percentage of the votes, the world would look friendlier to many of us.

As you know, the elections changed the majority in the Bundestag and led to the formation of a new coalition between the Social Democrats and the small Free Democratic Party. Thus, after 20 years of Cabinets formed by the Christian Democratic Union, we have now, for the first time after the war and for the first time after 40 years of German history, a government led by

the Social Democratic Party. The fact that this change of government took place as a normal event in the democratic process shows better than anything else the mature stage of German democracy.

Since the Social Democrats had been actively involved in formulating the policy of the so-called Grand Coalition during the last 3 years, there is also no dramatic change of policy to be expected. Opportunities for change, especially in foreign policy, are, anyway, never as far-reaching as some people tend to think. The basic conditions and the problems confronting a nation remain the same, and the number of options does not necessarily increase when a new government takes office. This is true for almost any country today, even for the two superpowers, but it is particularly true in the case of Germany, situated in the heart of Europe right in the center of the worldwide confrontation between the Communist East and the free, democratic West.

If, therefore, I should describe our future policy in a nutshell, I would say it will be a policy of active continuity. This will especially be the guideline for our policy with regard to the basic German problem: the separation of our people and the division of the country. While our goal remains self-determination and unity for the whole German nation, we see very clearly that, under present conditions, there is little prospect to achieve this in the near future. For the time being we have to concentrate on preserving and strengthening the bonds which exist between the two parts of our nation and preventing the people on both sides of the artificial demarcation line from getting estranged from each other. We are no dreamers. But we cannot give up the justified claim of our nation, the claim of freedom for all Germans. If we speak today of reunification, we mean amongst others to give the people, the Germans in East and West, again the opportunity to communicate freely and to live together. We also mean that those Germans on the other side of the wall obtain the right, which has been denied to them until now, to express their opinion.

If we want to proceed in this direction, we cannot disregard the realities which exist in Germany today, we cannot avoid taking into account the existence of two separate political systems on German soil. There is, after all, no denying the fact that besides the Federal Republic of Germany another entity exists which—though the regime is of foreign origin and lacks democratic legitimation—exercises the power of a state in its area. But underneath this temporary reality there is another more fundamental reality: The reality of one German nation, of people who share a common historic and cultural heritage, who have been living together for centuries and are related to each other by deep personal bonds. The feeling of this basic reality cannot be suppressed, and even the rulers in East Berlin cannot deny it. Nobody, therefore, can expect us to recognize the other part of our country as a foreign country—and to treat our compatriots as foreigners. Nobody can expect us to cut the ties between the people of our nation and to abandon those 17 million Germans in the East who had to pay a greater price for the lost war. For the sake of our self-respect, we have the duty to help them to win justice and the right of self-determination. For the same reasons we cannot give up Berlin, the German capital, which on a small scale reflects the division of the country, but at the same time stands as a symbol for the unity of the German nation. We can especially not give up 2 million Berliners, who live in the free part of the city and who have proved that they themselves are willing to make sacrifices to defend their freedom.

For these reasons the new German

Government will continue to consider recognition of the "GDR" by third countries as seriously affecting our interests and will reserve the right to take reprisals best suited to the individual case. This does not exclude that in our own relations with the other part of Germany we will seek to normalize the situation both within Berlin and between the two parts of Germany. As it is not in our power to change the present situation, we have to live with it and do what the interests of our nation demand. A solution to the human problems arising from the division of our country is more important than considerations of a mere formal nature. We have to see each other, speak together, and engage in exchanges of all kinds, always trying to promote freedom wherever and whenever it is possible.

We are therefore prepared to talk and to negotiate with the Communist authorities in the other part of Germany. High-level talks on a wide range of subjects were already proposed by the previous government in a letter written in April 1967 by Chancellor Kiesinger to Mr. Stoph, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers in the GDR! We have never received a formal reply; but we will repeat our offers with great emphasis in the time to come, in order to improve the situation of our nation in both parts of the country.

In the final analysis, any improvement of the situation in central Europe, and particularly in Germany, depends, of course, on the attitude of the Soviet Union and though to a far lesser extent, of other East European countries. We, therefore, attach great importance to the development of economic, cultural, and scientific exchange with our East European neighbors. We have undertaken to engage in a meaningful political dialog with the Soviet Union on the question of the renunciation of force, and we will now open negotiations with Poland to discuss the problems which stand between our two countries.

In the end, no peaceful order in Europe will be possible without a major effort of all concerned. The evolution of Soviet and East European policies gives ground for hope that those governments may eventually come to recognize the advantages of cooperation in working towards a just order of peace in Europe. Accordingly, we are resolved to direct our energies to realistic and balanced measures which might further a détente in East-West relations. We hope that the initiatives taken by the Federal Government to safeguard peace and promote détente in Europe will find a positive echo among our Eastern neighbors.

We have no illusions and do not expect to achieve quick results in this way. Nor do we consider relaxation of tensions as an aim in itself. It can only be part of a long-term process with a view to ultimately bringing about an order of peace in Europe, which alone will provide the framework for a solution to the problems of our divided Germany.

Openings towards the East, however, are not possible without a solid position of the West. If the Soviet Union is led to believe that Western solidarity is faltering, that we are about to dismantle our alliances and concede unilaterally what should be part of a negotiated agreement then we cannot hope to win concessions from the other side and get closer to establishing an order of peace in Europe.

Therefore, whatever we wish to achieve in this field, we can achieve it only in cooperation with each other—among European nations *and* within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance. It is not a mere coincidence that the new initiatives which we have taken in the field of East European policy were accompanied by the important decisions taken at the summit meeting of the Common Market 2 weeks ago and by a reaffirmation of our commitment to NATO and to a common Western position on East-West relations during the

NATO Council meeting. The idea to unite Europe economically and politically has been and will remain a cornerstone of our policy. If we look back on what has been achieved in this area, we can maintain that the existing institutions, the Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community, and Euratom have been fairly successful as far as the economic sector is concerned.

One of the greatest achievements was the establishment of a customs union on 1 July 1968 between the six member states of the Common Market. The gradual and eventually total abolishment of internal tariffs and the creation of a common external tariff has had a great and positive impact both on the development within the Common Market and on its trade with the outside world. From 1958 to 1968 the GNP of the Common Market countries rose by 141 percent (1958: $157.9 billion, 1968: $380.5 billion), resulting in an overall rise of the standard of living by 30 percent in real terms.

The creation of a market with 185 million increasingly prosperous consumers also greatly stimulated trade with third countries, especially with the United States. During the period of 1958 through 1968, the volume of trade between the Community and third countries more than doubled (1958: $32.1 billion, 1968: $71.8 billion); with the United States, however, it almost trebled (1958: $4.5 billion, 1968: $12.2 billion). During the same period, exports of the United States to Common Market countries were actually growing by 10 percent faster than the total of American exports. Moreover, American economy also indirectly participates in the growth of the Community, since many American companies took advantage of the extended production and marketing facilities offered by the Common Market and established European subsidiaries—the total American investment in Common Market countries amounting now to approximately $10 billion.

The customs union is, however, only the first, though a very important stage to the ultimate objective of the Common Market: the establishment of a true economic union. This presupposes not only abolition of tariff and nontariff obstacles to the free flow of goods, capital, and labor, it also calls for a harmonization of legislative, fiscal, monetary, and trade policy, and it calls, in the final analysis, for political cooperation in the broadest sense.

It is in this field that too little progress has been made so far. New and genuinely political incentives will be required if we wish to move forward in the direction toward a united Europe. In this context the issue of the British entry into the Common Market is of particular importance as well as a number of measures aiming at the internal development of the Community.

I think it is justified to say that the recent European summit meeting in the Hague has broken the deadlock on these issues and given new impetus to the work of the Community. Agreement was reached in principle on a timetable for preparing and opening the negotiations with Britain; the Community will be completed; procedures will be worked out with a view to harmonizing the economic and monetary policies of the member states; and last, but not least, a first step was made toward closer political consultation. Thereby the road toward further progress has been opened again, and we can hope that someday in the future we will reach the ultimate goal to establish true political solidarity among European states.

The unification of Europe is, after all, not just another political idea of our time. For Europeans it is, on the contrary, an absolute necessity. Anybody who lived and worked outside of Europe and has, for instance, witnessed the developments of the Middle East crisis must have been impressed by the

decline of European influence in world affairs. And any European who had the opportunity to see the launching of Apollo 11 and 12 at Cape Kennedy could not help thinking what a great contribution to the technological future of our world Europe, too, could make if it were only united. Today Europe is indeed faced with the alternative of uniting and further participating actively in the history of mankind or of declining, as other great cultures have done before in history.

Europe, of course, does not stand alone. It is part of the Western community of free nations and depends on close relations, especially with the United States. For us, of equally great and, for our security, even decisive importance is, therefore, the North Atlantic Alliance, since it provides a link not only with our European partners, but also with the United States.

The purpose of this Alliance, formed to preserve the freedom of our countries is well known; and if over the past 25 years the Soviet Union was not able to extend her sphere of influence further to the West—we owe it indeed to NATO. It is certainly true that Soviet policy has changed considerably since the height of the cold war, when NATO was founded. But it still remains doubtful whether it is not more a change in style and tactics than in long-range strategy. At any rate, it would be both unwise and dangerous to rely for our own policy on allegedly peaceful Soviet intentions—about which we know little more than nothing—and disregard actual Soviet capabilities which, in the conventional as well as in the nuclear field, are enormous. The Alliance as an instrument of deterrence, therefore, continues to be necessary. And it is necessary not only in the interest of European countries, but as much in the interest of the United States.

By its very nature and by its geographic situation, the United States is a country which can pursue its global interests only if it is able to reach beyond the oceans on its eastern and western shores. While on the Pacific side it may be sufficient to maintain positions off the mainland on islands and countries surrounding it, in Europe it is different. Immediate American presence on European soil is indispensable in order to keep the Atlantic area free from Soviet influence. It is also in Europe where the worldwide confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union has reached its greatest intensity. For by virtue of its economic and industrial potential and by its geographic situation, Europe must be of particular importance to both East and West. If either side could win control over the whole of Europe, it would definitely swing the balance in its favor. If especially the Soviet Union established hegemony over Western Europe, it would not only become economically more powerful than the United States, but gain decisive influence in the Middle East and north Africa not to mention the impact this would have on the nations of the third world. The defense of Europe is, therefore, not exclusively a European problem, but at the same time a problem of the United States.

It is quite obvious that, in military terms, Europe cannot be defended without the assistance of the United States. By themselves West European countries —whatever their defense efforts may be—cannot hold the balance against the conventional and nuclear power of the Soviet Union. In the final analysis the security of Western Europe rests upon the nuclear capability of the United States. The credibility of the ultimate nuclear commitment of this country is, on the other hand, tied to the actual presence of American troops in Europe. If they leave or if they are substantially reduced, there would be serious danger of miscalculation by the other side, and NATO would lose its value as a deterrent.

I understand perfectly well that

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Americans are often dissatisfied with the defense efforts made by the European Allies. But such criticism often does not take appropriate account of the particular situation of European countries and of the inherent limitations of their capabilities. In the crucial center area of NATO, where in case of conflict the main Soviet thrust would have to be expected, the number of countries which can make an efficient contribution to the joint defense system is most limited. Though it may be desirable, we cannot expect France to return to the integrated military system of NATO. Britain is preoccupied with her economic difficulties and, apart from that, has still other overseas commitments. The contribution of the small Benelux countries is doubtless considerable in quality but naturally limited in quantity. There remains the Federal Republic of Germany. It is nothing but natural that we, who are in the most precarious position, are expected to make special efforts. We are prepared to do so as we have proved in the past, and our attitude in this respect will not change in the future. But one must not overlook the fact that the Federal Republic of Germany already now provides almost 50 percent of NATO ground forces and 30 percent of the air forces permanently available in Europe. A significant increase in German military strength—even provided that it is feasible—would necessarily—for reasons which need not be explained—raise misgivings both among our East and West European neighbors.

We have, therefore, to accept the fact that American contingents can be replaced by European, in particular by German forces, only to a very limited extent. Under these circumstances a substantial reduction of American combat forces in Europe would necessarily weaken the overall strength of the Alliance. It would certainly upset the present NATO strategy of flexible response, which requires, in addition to the nuclear deterrent, sufficient conventional forces capable of meeting any kind of attack on the conventional level.

Perhaps even more important than the military consequences might be the political effects of American troop reductions. It is highly doubtful that such a move, as some people in this country tend to think, would encourage the European Allies to increase their own efforts and stimulate the movement toward European unity. The possibility can, on the contrary, not be excluded that American troop reductions would have a disintegrating effect. It is indeed difficult to see how the United States can avoid a reduction of its military commitment to be interpreted—by other NATO members as well as by the Soviet Union—as a reduction also of the American political commitment in Europe. Some European countries might assume that the United States was losing interest in Europe and would, therefore, begin to reassess their own policy with regard to the West and to the East. It certainly is not suggested that American troops should remain in Europe for an indefinite future. But it is absolutely essential that their reduction and perhaps eventual withdrawal are made contingent on developments which would allow such a move without changing the balance of power. It was, therefore, most encouraging that both Secretary Rogers and Secretary Laird at the recent NATO Council Meeting reaffirmed the American determination to maintain the present troop levels in Europe at least until the end of fiscal year 1971.

It cannot be repeated too often that the Alliance must be strong—not to win wars, but to avoid them and to provide a solid basis for negotiations. As I said before: A constructive policy aiming at lasting political settlements in Europe will not be possible by unilateral concessions but only by carefully balanced steps. NATO is engaged, for some years already, in a dual mission of defense and

of détente. Nobody wants a direct military confrontation with the Soviet Union, certainly not Germany, which probably would be the first and principal battlefield. We are, on the contrary, deeply convinced that solutions to the great political issues can and should be found only by peaceful means, by a flexible approach which is open for compromise where it is necessary. But we have to see quite clearly that it will not be possible to deal with the Soviet Union from a position of weakness, of readiness for political and military withdrawal. We should be flexible to improve the situation wherever possible, but firm in our determination to defend our interests. As in the past, Germany will not hesitate to make its contribution.

A solution is not possible between ourselves and other opponents alone, but only with the help of our friends—and thank God we have friends in the world again.

Konrad Adenauer, October 13, 1963